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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 28 July 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you of continued heightened tensions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, due to the illegal and repressive practices being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people under its brutal occupation. In complete defiance of the unequivocal calls by the international community to de-escalate the situation in Occupied East Jerusalem, Israel is continuing its aggressions against the Palestinian civilian population, including worshippers and peaceful demonstrators, and against holy sites in the City, particularly the Haram al-Sharif, which houses the Aqsa Mosque.

As we have repeatedly appealed, we continue to call upon the international community, particularly the Security Council, to work diligently to stem the dangerous deterioration to avert further bloodshed and instability, ensure respect for the relevant resolutions, including with regard to the status of Occupied East Jerusalem as occupied territory and the prohibition of all acts aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the City, and ensure respect for the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif.

On the evening of Thursday, 27 July 2017, thousands of Palestinians entered the Aqsa Mosque compound in Occupied East Jerusalem after nearly two weeks of peaceful demonstrations against Israel's provocative, discriminatory and unilateral measures imposed on Friday, 14 July 2017. However, following sunset Maghrib prayers, Palestinian worshippers were met, yet again, with repression by the Israeli occupying forces. At least 100 Palestinian worshipers were detained from inside the mosque, and the occupying forces fired rubber-coated steel bullets, stun grenades and tear gas at the crowds in the holy compound, injuring dozens of Palestinian civilians. Today, Friday, 28 July 2017, the occupying authorities imposed restrictions on entry to the compound, including banning Palestinian men under the age of 50 from access to the Haram al-Sharif, in flagrant violation of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their freedom of worship.

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Moreover, Israeli occupying forces remained heavily deployed in the Aqsa compound and throughout the Old City of East Jerusalem, as well as in other cities, towns and villages across the occupied West Bank. This display of military force, along with the direct measures taken in and around the Aqsa compound, are aggravating an already dangerous situation. We must therefore reiterate our demand that all such acts of aggression and provocations and incitement regarding the Aqsa Mosque compound stop immediately.

We further appeal again to the international community to compel the occupying Power to respect the historic status quo of the Aqsa compound and comply with the numerous relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and General Assembly resolutions pertaining to the holy sites. The occupying Power must show respect for the sanctity of this holy site and respect the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as the custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. All illegal and unilateral measures by the occupying Power must be reversed, and guarantees must be put in place that such measures, or any other provocative measures, for that matter, will not be repeated, as they will only risk exacerbating religious sensitivities, which must be averted at all costs.

This explosive situation also continues to spill over to other areas across the occupied West Bank. Today, a Palestinian young man was shot dead by Israeli occupying forces north of Al-Khalil (Hebron), in the occupied West Bank. The occupying Power has claimed, as in so many other uncorroborated incidents, that Abdullah Taqatqa, aged 24, from Bethlehem, had tried to "stab" Israeli occupying forces. However, witnesses reported that "Israeli forces shot at him while he was around 20 metres away from them" and that Taqatqa "didn't have any type of knife with him or any kind of weapon".

Also in Al-Khalil, yesterday, around 100 Israeli illegal settlers forcibly and violently took over a Palestinian home in the Old City. Human rights and civil society activists documented on video the raid by extremist settlers of the Abu Rajab family home right under the watch and protection of Israeli occupying forces. Moreover, videos posted on Facebook show occupying forces shoving and attacking members of the Abu Rajab family as hundreds of illegal settlers applauded.

In addition to the above-mentioned violations by the occupying Power and its terrorist settlers, Israel continues to further provoke and incite with new announcements of illegal schemes to annex Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Yesterday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced his support for so-called "legislation" aimed at the illegal annexation of settlements illegally constructed on Palestinian land and in which more than 150,000 Israeli settlers illegally reside. The so-called "Greater Jerusalem bill" would add the illegal settlements of "Gush Etzion", "Efrat", "Betar Illit", "Givat Ze'ev" and "Ma'aleh Adumim" within Occupied East Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, creating a greater metropolitan area and, in effect, the illegally de facto annexing of those settlements to Israel.

We emphatically recall that, regardless of the occupying Power's attempts to brand and justify its illegal measures and actions, all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal, constituting a flagrant violation of international law and absolute defiance of the international community's strong condemnations and demands for an immediate and complete cessation. Furthermore, settlement activities are in complete contradiction of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and are a major obstacle to peace, the prospects for which are diminished by the day as Israel presses on with this aggressive colonization campaign. These decisions, taken at the highest level,

including by the Prime Minister himself, are evidence of the occupying Power's actual objectives and its intent to take the parties and the region further and further away from peace.

We call upon the international community to take a firm and principled stand against all illegal Israeli actions against the Palestinian people and their land, including firmly demanding that it immediately cease all measures and provocations violating the status quo of the holy sites, stoking religious sensitivities and fuelling the current violence and bloody confrontations. As reiterated at the Arab foreign ministers' meeting, convened in Cairo yesterday, 27 July 2017, to address the Israeli violations and restrictions on the Aqsa Mosque, the Security Council, in particular, has a clear role to play in this regard and must act to uphold and implement its own resolutions. Moreover, the international community must act responsibly and take serious and bold action aimed at compelling Israel to cease immediately and completely all of its crimes and violations before it is too late and to act forthwith to end the occupation that began in 1967. These steps are urgent, long overdue and central to allowing the Palestinian people to finally live in freedom and dignity in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 616 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 21 July 2017 (A/ES-10/758-S/2017/632), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations